



**CEPPS/IRI AFGHANISTAN Quarterly Report: April - June 2005**  
**Afghanistan: Establishing Foundations for a Fair and Competitive**  
**Electoral System/ Promoting Politically Active Citizenry**  
**USAID Cooperative Agreement Number: DCG-A-00-01-00004-00**  
**Project Dates: March 2003 – December 2005**  
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**Project # 8083**

## **I. SUMMARY**

To support the September elections, IRI began its parliamentary election program this spring by conducting candidate registration/information sessions in 33 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. IRI's independent candidate focus, attracted a wide audience and have resulted in follow-up requests for campaign training by many participants. IRI has already begun training sessions to provide potential candidates with the skills they need to mount successful electoral campaigns for the Wolesi Jirga and the Provincial Council. With over 80% of potential candidates registered as independents IRI has turned its attention to supporting initiatives for the development of independent coalitions with interested parties by coordinating dialogues between the candidates and a number of small pre-existing coalitions. IRI's work dovetails with efforts to support the electoral process by increasing awareness of electoral representation and citizenship, and by providing candidates and leadership with increased knowledge of the priorities and aspirations of the electorate at a critical time in Afghan history.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

The UN-brokered Bonn Accord, based on the principles of "national reconciliation, lasting peace, and stability," called for the establishment of an interim administration to govern Afghanistan until the appointment of a transitional authority by a Loya Jirga (grand council of Afghan elders).

In June 2002, the council elected Hamid Karzai as the interim head of state until the holding of national elections in October 2004. Between June 2003 and October 2004, President Karzai's interim administration reopened schools, reconstituted the national

army and police force, initiated a battle to quash illegal drug production, and adopted a new constitution establishing a democratic Islamic government that guarantees equal rights and protection for every citizen.

The Karzai interim administration was centralized, national, and purely executive in nature. While this served to strengthen the Transitional Authority's decision-making capacity on issues of reconstruction, it came at a price. Prior to the first election, when popular buy-in was most needed, the forces for democratization at the national level were confronted with a disconnected local population, uninformed and vulnerable to the influences and pressures of regressive elements at the grassroots level. This problem remains a particular challenge in the southeastern border region where instability has prevailed since the fall of the Taliban.

IRI's pre-election programming in Afghanistan was based on the premise that if traditional leadership ("opinion makers") - and the networks of patronage that existed prior to the upheavals of the late 1970s - were effectively brought into the process of democratization, directly and systematically, through carefully constructed outreach and communication efforts, this target group could deliver the electorate to polling stations in service of the Bonn objectives.

On October 9, 2004, more than eight million Afghans cast their ballot in the country's first-ever direct presidential election. The day went smoothly and peacefully and President Karzai emerged the clear winner, receiving more than 55% of the votes. Former education minister Yunis Qanooni was Karzai's closest challenger with 16%.

Much of the success of the Afghan elections can be attributed to the hard work and dedication of IRI's local Afghan partner organizations. Election-day turnout, alone, is testament to how successfully their messages penetrated Afghan society.

Yet, while Afghanistan's Presidential Election was a success, its democratic transition is not yet complete. In September 2005 Afghanistan will hold its first parliamentary elections in over twenty-five years, during which the final component of the country's national government will be constituted. Karzai's administration has accomplished a great deal since its establishment, but it will not achieve complete legitimacy until successful parliamentary elections are held. Ensuring this success will be a daunting task for which all the resources of the Afghan government and the international aid community must be marshaled.

### ***IRI PROGRAM HISTORY***

Following the installation of current President Hamid Karzai as the head of the Afghan Interim Administration in December 2001, IRI traveled to Afghanistan to examine the context in which the country's future was being determined. As a result, IRI began to undertake a series of activities aimed at assisting Afghan civil society actors to help in the country's crucial and sensitive transition. IRI began by providing technical and material assistance to three domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that were mostly

operating out of Peshawar, Pakistan. IRI moved quickly to assist these NGOs in their repatriation efforts and incorporated these into IRI's long-term programmatic goals.

In March 2002, IRI provided support to the then Peshawar-based Afghan NGO Coordination Bureau (ANCB) in its relocation to Afghanistan, allowing the 140-NGO-member group to reopen and expand its Kabul office. At a critical time in the country's immediate post-war transition, ANCB's transfer to Kabul allowed for its organizational structure and collective expertise to again be based out of the capital. With beneficiaries numbering in the millions of Afghan citizens, ANCB and its member organizations served as a vital link between Afghans and the international donor community. Following the collapse of the Taliban, the Bureau assumed a new role representing the priorities of its beneficiaries throughout the country in direct dealings with the transitional Afghan government. In the process, ANCB's membership has more than doubled. As of March, 2004, more than 325 Afghan NGOs were affiliated with ANCB.

In an effort to provide Afghans with an objective account of developments in their country during this critical period, IRI also began collaborating with the then Peshawar-based Afghan Media Resource Center (AMRC) and its weekly newspaper *Erada*. With an initial readership on both sides of the border, approximately 6,000 at the beginning of 2002, *Erada* was already circulating in post-Taliban Afghanistan. In order to increase its capacity to play a role in informing the public, IRI support to AMRC allowed the Center to transfer its administrative structure and printing operations to Kabul in mid-2002. Once the installation of a new offset printing press was completed (acquired with IRI support) in November 2002, *Erada* became a daily publication. As of March 2004, the daily's average circulation was 11,000 copies. In January 2004, additional IRI support allowed AMRC to inaugurate a new color printer, a further step in the drive to make *Erada* sustainable. At present, *Erada* is the only independent daily publication in Afghanistan printed in both Dari and Pashtu, Afghanistan's two primary languages.

Finally, IRI noted it was essential to increase opportunities for ordinary Afghans to participate in what was and remains a very fluid political process. Furthermore, it was evident that after more than two decades of war and destruction, a vehicle for educating the public on matters of democracy and citizenship was needed. To that end, IRI began supporting the Welfare Association for the Development of Afghanistan (WADAN) and its mobile training program to educate community leaders on issues of pluralism and citizen participation. In addition, IRI established a Regional Shura Network (RSN) with offices and outreach in the country's eight regional administrative centers. RSN provides "marginalized" local leadership with the link to policymakers that has been lacking to date, while continuing its program of civic education and voter mobilization.

The primary purpose of the Regional Shura Offices was to provide: venues for the continued and expanded civic education exercises targeting local opinion-makers; neutral centers for local opinion-makers in each region to discuss and debate local and national issues in the run-up to elections; meeting places for national officials with local leadership; and, resource centers for the dissemination of civic and voter education materials to surrounding provinces and districts.

IRI conducted two political public opinion surveys in Afghanistan in 2004; a political opinion poll in June, and an election-day poll October 9. The June survey gauged the attitudes of 2,378 respondents on issues including the constitution, elections, security, reconstruction, national personalities, and overall views of the future prospects for Afghanistan. According to the June survey, the top three issues on voters' minds were security/end of warlordism, reconstruction, and economic development.

Since there were neither extensive nationwide observers on election-day, nor a parallel vote tally due to fears of violence, IRI conducted an election-day poll to provide a measure of confidence in the election process and an eventual check on the outcome. Amid widespread allegations of fraud by the opposition, IRI's poll proved valuable in demonstrating that no less than 97% of voters polled considered the election either "with some problems but generally good" or "Free and Fair."

### **III. QUARTERLY PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

#### ***Independent Candidate Training and Coalition-Building: Phase One***

IRI began its parliamentary election program this spring by conducting candidate registration information sessions across Afghanistan. These programs reached more than 15,000 potential independent candidates for Afghanistan's parliament and provincial councils during 41 events in 33 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. During sessions participants were given details on the elections, the roles and responsibilities of elected officials, and information on how to become a candidate. In addition, trainers encouraged potential candidates to form coalitions with other like minded independent candidates and discussed how coalition building would serve to create more cohesive bodies and prevent a fractious parliament and provincial council. At these sessions IRI distributed more than 9,000 candidate registration packets supplied by the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB). Aside from the JEMB, IRI was the only organization distributing these packets and the only organization conducting candidate information sessions. More than 300 independent candidates have already contacted IRI staff to request campaign training.

In an effort to boost female participation in the upcoming elections, IRI coordinated a candidate registration information session designed solely for women in Kabul in early May. The jointly hosted, by IRI and the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs, was attended by 550 women from all over the country. More than 300 candidate registration packets were distributed at the event.

Now that the candidate registration process period has ended, IRI staff members are supporting initiatives for the development of independent coalitions with interested parties by coordinating dialogues between the candidates and a number of small pre-existing coalitions. IRI field representatives have met with elders and potential

candidates in virtually every district in more than a dozen provinces including; Konar, Nooristan, Kundoz, Kapisa, and Parwan.

In addition, IRI has begun initiating projects to increase awareness of the voter registration period. IRI field representatives and Welfare Association for the Development of Afghanistan (WADAN) contacts are currently disseminating voter registration information sheets detailing times, procedures, and locations to local partners as well as independent candidates and coalitions with whom IRI is working. A women's voter registration drive is slated for July.

Once the official candidate list is released IRI will continue its efforts by contacting candidates to inform them of upcoming candidate training activities. IRI staff members are currently developing a candidate database in order to track their information and provide easier access to them in the future.

IRI staffers are also helping facilitate the complaint filing process. As only international NGO's can submit objections anonymously, IRI is collecting written, detailed, first-hand accounts, to minimize falsification and to help ensure the filers evade potential retribution for filing complaints. Complaints have ranged in concern from allegations of rape to Iranian influence-peddling.

#### **IV. RESULTS & INDICATORS**

**Objective 1:** To improve civic awareness of a liberal democratic culture by conducting nation-wide participatory civic education and public awareness campaigns.

**Result 1:** Afghans will understand their rights/duties as citizens in a democracy, the purpose and function of the parliament and provincial councils and will participate in parliamentary and provincial elections.

*Indicators:* 1.1 Increasing numbers of citizens will be drawn into discussion and debate over the role of democracy in underpinning reconstruction efforts through public forums, and grassroots education efforts;

1.2 Outlying provinces and marginalized communities will be brought into the national dialogue on democracy through grassroots civic education efforts, print and broadcast media, and polling;

1.3 Voter turnout in target provinces will match or exceed presidential election.

N/A

**Objective 2:** To provide independent candidates with the skills needed to mount successful electoral campaigns for Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council elections.

**Result 1:** Independent candidates mount successful campaigns.

*Indicators:* 1.1 Independent candidates will develop issue-based platforms;

1.2 Independent candidates will reference survey findings in the development of issue-based platforms and messages;

1.3 Independent candidates will build coalitions beyond their home district/province, and engage electorate and the national level government;

1.4 Independent candidates will run organized campaigns and create voter outreach materials.

**Objective 3:** To show support for the Afghan electorate by providing an international presence on Election Day.

No results to report.

## **V. EVALUATION**

**Objective 1:** To improve civic awareness of a liberal democratic culture by conducting nation-wide participatory civic education and public awareness campaigns.

IRI's Independent Candidate Registration Information Sessions reached 15,000 potential candidates in 33 provinces. Nearly 500 Afghans registered as independent candidates as a direct result of IRI's sessions. Current candidate registration reports which show that 5,816 Afghans have stepped forward to run for the Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council elections indicate that IRI's nationwide training has had a good deal of impact as more than 80% of registered candidates are independents. In addition, 336 women have registered as candidates for the Wolesi Jirga and 240 women will compete in Provincial Council elections. These results are extremely promising and will be built upon during future programs focusing on a separate campaign training program for women. We are currently cross-referencing registered candidates with names in the IRI database to examine the numbers of participants from the candidate information sessions who actually filed.

Through the aid of extensive coverage on local radio and television stations as well as field representatives programs in 33 of the 34 provinces our training sessions have met with great popularity while engaging marginalized communities.

**Objective 2:** To provide independent candidates with the skills needed to mount successful electoral campaigns for Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council elections.

Shortly after the Independent Candidate Registration Information Sessions, potential independent candidates from around the country began contacting IRI not only to request future training but to report that they had been creating coalitions in response to recommendations and information they received at an IRI candidate information session. IRI has already received excellent response from these programs as more than 300 independent candidates have already contacted IRI staff to request training. The United Nations is encouraging this process by distributing the phone numbers of IRI staff to all independent candidates seeking further information or training. IRI will begin additional training sessions aimed at developing independent candidate campaign skills shortly after the ballot is set on July 12.

**Objective 3:** To show support for the Afghan electorate by providing an international presence on Election Day.

No results to report.

## **VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

### *Parliamentary Election Programming*

Polling conducted by IRI in the past provides strong indicators that political parties are unpopular with Afghan voters, and that the government has adopted an electoral system that favors independent candidates. There is concern in the international donor community, however, that such a system will lead to a technically unmanageable number of candidates. Most international support efforts are concentrated on the development of the existing political parties to the exclusion of independents.

IRI has developed a three-phase program to help even the playing field between the independents and the better-funded and organized political parties. First, IRI will demonstrate the benefits of collective-action to the independents and encourage them to form provincial coalitions that will better marshal the votes necessary to elect their candidates; this will both reduce the complexity of the ballot and decrease the likelihood that large numbers of independent candidates will cancel out one another's votes.

Beginning with its current network of local opinion-makers cultivated through previous and continuing civic education efforts, IRI will expand these provincial coalitions to include as many distinct populations of independents as possible: urban, rural, female, intellectual, etc. These individual provincial coalitions will then be encouraged to consolidate at the national level, electing officers to represent their interests to the media and the government in Kabul.

Second, IRI will train candidates nominated by the provincial coalitions in the skills required to run effective electoral campaigns. Furthermore, national representatives of the independents will be trained in media and government interaction so as to strengthen their candidates everywhere they are running.

Third, as Election Day approaches, IRI will conduct a public opinion poll to gauge needs and desires of electorate. IRI, will use these results in candidate and platform development training. Further training will be devoted to an independent coalition candidates on voter mobilization.

For Election Day, IRI plans to field a 20 person observation mission. However, the security situation will dictate deployments outside of Kabul.



## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Prospective Independent Candidate Curriculum

### **Prospective Independent Candidate & Coalition-Building Information Session:**

#### I. Role of the Parliament

##### 1. General

- The parliament is the voice of the people
- More powerful than the President: Can pass laws, spend money, approve appointments
- Representatives from all over the country will be elected and sit in the parliament. This is your chance to elect your representative, someone you know and trust, to speak for you.

##### 2. Afghan Governing Bodies: The National Assembly and Local Councils

- a. National Assembly consists of two bodies: Wolesi Jirga and Meshrano Jirga  
All legislation must pass both bodies, except for the budget (just Wolesi)

- Wolesi Jirga
  - Primary legislative body; very powerful
  - 249 seats divided up by province
- Meshrano Jirga
  - 1/3 appointed by President
  - 1/3 elected by Provincial Councils
  - 1/3 elected by District Councils

b. The Local Councils: Provincial and District

\*\*Primary responsibility is to elect Meshrano Jirga; may also have local governing duties

- Provincial Councils
  - Members are elected province-wide
  - Each Provincial Council will elect one member to the Meshrano Jirga
  - Number of members depends upon size of the province
- District Councils
  - Members are elected by district
  - District councils for the entire province will meet to elect one member of the Meshrano Jirga
  - Number of members depends upon the size of the district

II. Afghan Electoral System

1. Upcoming elections: September 18; Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council; District elections delayed
2. Candidates will be elected province-wide
3. Registered political parties can field a slate of candidates
4. Independent candidates may also run
5. A candidate's name, picture, and party name (if they have one) will appear on the ballot. The symbol of the party will also appear on the ballot; in the case of Independent candidates, they will choose a symbol from a pre-existing list when the file to appear on the ballot
6. Voters will receive two ballots; one for Wolesi Jirga and one for Provincial Council
7. They have one vote for each ballot; they vote for one Wolesi Jirga and one Council candidate

8. The candidates with the most votes win; must include two women from every province

- If there are 8 seats, the top two women will win + the top 6 men
- Where there are only two seats, one goes to a woman

### III. How to Become a Candidate

**\*\*Filing period opens April 30 and closes May 19**

#### 1. Qualifications

- Shall be an Afghan citizen or shall have obtained citizenship at least ten years prior to candidacy
- Shall not have been convicted of crimes against humanity, as well as a crime or deprivation of civil rights by a court
- Shall have reached 25 years of age on candidacy for the *Wolesi Jirga*
- Only run for *Wolesi Jirga* or Provincial Council, not both
- Be a registered voter, and prove this fact by presentation of the candidate's Voter Registration Card
- Not have non-official military forces or belong to such
- Have resigned from any positions of public office pursuant to Article 13 of the Electoral Law

#### 2. Requirements

- Present a list of voters who support their candidacy in the constituency in which they wish to stand for election (a list of 300 supporters is required for *Wolesi Jirga* elections and 200 for Provincial Council elections)
- Provide a monetary deposit at the time of filing candidacy papers, which will be returned if the candidate is elected or receives more than 2% of the votes (10,000 Afghani for *Wolesi Jirga* candidates and 4,000 Afghani for Provincial Council)
- Sign a Code of Conduct for Candidates which regulates the behaviour of candidates
- Present nomination papers at offices authorised by the JEMB to receive candidate nominations, and sign a statement that all information provided is correct

#### IV. Independent Coalition-Building

##### 1. PROBLEM: The Advantages of the Political Parties

- a. Political parties have money, manpower, organization, coordination, a head start
- b. Independents stand alone: no money, no organization, no coordination, no one to help
- c. That's why Independents need to organize themselves
  - That way, they, too, will have all the benefits of organizing and collective action
  - It's easy to break one stick, but you can't break a bundle of sticks

##### 2. SOLUTION: Independent Coalition-Building

- a. An organization of Independents
- b. Province-wide, with representatives from the districts
- c. Declaration of Principles

Keep it simple:

- Support Democracy
  - Renounce violence, coercion, intimidation
  - No connection to warlords
  - No connection to the opium trade
  - Promise to represent the Afghan people
- d. Hold a province-wide meeting
    - Sign declaration of principles
    - Elect a chair to preside over meeting
    - Select candidates
    - Elect officers
    - Set up local committees
    - Gather everyone's name and contact information
  - e. But the job's not finished at that point: Actively support those candidates, helping them win

- Help them get on the ballot: Raise money for filing fee; collect signatures
  - Help spread the word
  - Help turn out the vote
- f. These Independent candidates pool their resources, work together
- Share in the cost of ads, posters, flyers
  - Build an organization that will help them all get elected
  - For example, I can only afford 1,000 flyers and my fellow Independent candidate can also only afford 1,000; but if we pool our resources, we will have 2,000 flyers with BOTH of our names/pictures on it. And we will also have my friends AND his friends passing them out.
- g. The end result:
- Coalitions in every province, in alliance with each other
  - Focus on winning a couple of seats; if every province's coalition did this, you would have the largest bloc of seats
  - These Independent candidates then work together in the parliament
  - And you have an organization that can put pressure on the government

### 3. Qualities you want in candidates

- a. The first, you know: Smart, honest, honorable etc.
- b. But second: this is a democracy and you need someone who can win. If they can't win, they can't change things.
- Need someone who is popular, who knows a lot of people, and a lot of people like him
  - It takes money to run and win, and you need someone who has it or who can get it
- c. You have to spread out your candidates
- Different tribes
  - Different parts of the province
  - If they are from same area, same tribe, they will all lose
- d. You don't want to run a full slate

- If you run too many candidates, you'll be spreading yourself too thin. Focus your limited resources, organization, and support on fewer candidates.

#### 4. Selecting a slate of candidates; an example

##### a. Take an inventory

- How many seats for Wolesi Jirga? For Provincial Council?
- What are the largest villages, cities, parts of the province?
- What are the different ethnic groups?
- What are the different tribes?
- How many people voted in the presidential election?

##### b. For our example, let's assume there are 10 seats available

##### c. Two of those seats will go to women; select one woman candidate

##### d. The 8 remaining seats will be for men

##### e. Select roughly half that number of candidates; remember, just try to win a few seats

##### f. Choose people from different parts of the province, different tribes, ethnic groups

##### g. For our example, let's assume 400,000 people voted in the presidential from this area

##### h. Therefore, each of the ten seats will represent roughly 40,000 people; rough estimate of number of votes needed; won't be more than that.

##### i. And each of our four candidates should therefore have an area of 100,000 votes for each from which to draw the 30-40,000 votes they will need to win.

##### j. Also, make sure your woman candidate is from a large area that will back her.

##### k. Make sure your candidates can get the money and the signatures to get on the ballot!

#### V. The Next Steps

##### 1. Before you leave

- Make sure you have contact info WADAN local contact
- Make sure that we have your name and contact info
- Join our phone tree so information can get to all of you quickly
- Let's agree on a time and place when you will select candidates

##### 2. After you leave

- Call a meeting in your village and tell them what you have learned here
- Send people to neighboring villages to pass on what you have learned here; tell them about the next meeting
- Sign-up other people as well, not just maliks; make sure you send their names to us
- Start thinking about good candidates
- Start collecting signatures; have the people in your village sign the petitions so you can pass it along to the coalition's candidates
- Start raising money; ask people in your village to donate money so that the coalition's candidates can get on the ballot; even a few Afghanis each can add up if enough people contribute

